is useless to inquire; for it had not been issued twenty-four hours when the Confederates evacuated Centreville, and also all their batteries on the Potomac, thus changing the situation completely. Johnston,—his forces now concentrated,—fell back at first behind the Rappahannock, and, shortly afterwards, behind the Rapidan. He abandoned some heavy guns, and also a considerable quantity of provisions, which, against his expressed wishes, had been accumulated at Manassas Junction by the Confederate commissary general. A large meat-packing establishment, most unwisely located by the same authority at Thoroughfare Gap, on the line of the Manassas Gap railroad, was also abandoned. In fact the whole line of the railroad was given up.

This move was made by General Johnston somewhat earlier than he deemed, it advisable to make it, at the express desire of President Davis. The matter was decided on at Richmond on the 20th of February.[1] It was considered that Johnston was too far to the front, and that his position might easily be turned by the Federal commander whenever he might choose to advance. Johnston himself desired to defer falling back until the roads should become better, and make it possible for him to carry off all his artillery and stores, which the limited capacity of

the Orange and Alexandria railroad would not permit; but Mr. Davis thought it wiser to commence the operation at once. No trace whatever of this movement having been occasioned by the discovery that McOlellan was intending to proceed to Urbana can be found; the

[1] I B, & LM 256; Johnston's *Narrative,* 96.